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October 27, 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Secretary

FROM: INR - Roger Hillsman *RTH/gh*

SUBJECT: Moscow Ups the Ante in Cuba Negotiations

We seek in this memorandum to update the estimate in our memorandum of early this morning in light of today's public letter from Khrushchev, proposing a trade-off of missiles in Turkey for missiles in Cuba.

After privately offering what seemed on the face of it a surprisingly cheap bargain for the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba yesterday, Moscow today publicly insists that the US must also withdraw "its" missiles from Turkey. In making the proposal, Khrushchev in effect admits for the first time publicly that Soviet missiles are in Cuba, though he attributes the characterization "offensive" to the US. Indeed, Khrushchev for the first time explicitly indicated that the missiles based in Cuba were part of the Soviet Union's own strategic striking force.

A number of pitfalls are immediately apparent in the Khrushchev proposal:

- 1) The Soviets probably calculated that a mere mention of the possibility of negotiations would disturb US-Turkish relations as well as the NATO alliance.
- 2) The reference to Britain and Italy suggest that at some point in the talks, the USSR might attempt to raise the ante again and propose inclusion of other countries in the arrangement.
- 3) The proposal is ambiguous concerning the time limit, and the period mentioned apparently concerns the end of the negotiations and not the length of time for dismantling the bases.
- 4) The inspection proposal, although forthcoming on the face of it, opens up the usual questions concerning terms of reference and veto power.
- 5) The assurances to Cuba raise the same problems as the previous letter with regard to the legitimacy of the Castro regime and US relations with Cuban exiles.

In terms of Soviet objections in this confrontation, this latest development strengthens the estimate that the USSR is seeking to gain time for its missiles in Cuba to attain operational effectiveness while fostering a political atmosphere in which forceful US action becomes increasingly difficult. The proposal continues the Soviet effort to make dismantling of the missiles a subject rather than a precondition for negotiations.

TOP SECRET -- EYES ONLY

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Soviet Motivations in Responding

Moscow would be under considerable pressure to respond to the US destruction of an element of the Soviet military presence in Cuba. It would wish to do so to preserve Cuban confidence, to avoid making a show of weakness in US eyes, and if possible to achieve the aim of interdicting US reconnaissance over Cuba.

However, a countervailing factor would be Moscow's reluctance to see military action in Cuba escalate into a local war which the Soviet Union could not hope to win, or worse yet a general war.

The Soviets would also wish to preserve their posture of being the reasonable party expressing willingness to negotiate peacefully while the US was preparing to take aggressive action. To some extent this pose would be undercut, if the Soviets were themselves to do the escalating.

Soviet Reaction

Given the strong forces operating both to impel and restrain the Soviets, the USSR's reaction cannot be predicted with certainty.

Moscow's first reaction might be merely to repeat the shooting down of a subsequent US plane without taking further action. The Soviets might hope that the US would desist rather than trade U-2's and SAMs one for one. However, Moscow could not long play a trading game; Soviet air defense of Cuba would soon be debilitated and the risk of US invasion might be greater.

Subsequently Moscow would be more likely to seek other forms of retaliation. Harassment, perhaps by the Cubans of US ships or planes in the immediate area is a possibility. The Cubans might shell selected targets on Guantanamo. Or, the Soviets might seek to attack US forces elsewhere, e.g. peripheral reconnaissance missions.

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